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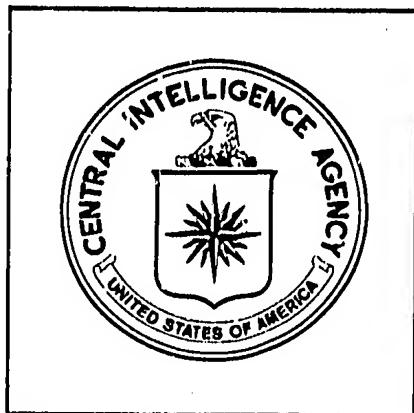
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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Organization of African Unity

Ministerial Council Meets in Addis Ababa

The foreign ministers' council of the Organization of African Unity approved resolutions on southern Africa, Afro-Arab cooperation, and the Middle East during its annual budget session last week in Addis Ababa. Although the fighting in Eritrea had prompted some speculation that the Eritrean problem might be discussed, the issue was not formally raised in keeping with the organization's policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of member states.

The council adopted an Algerian proposal calling for an extraordinary foreign ministers meeting in Tanzania in April to discuss a coordinated diplomatic policy toward South Africa and Rhodesia. Several ministers and liberation group representatives took Tanzania, Botswana, and Zambia to task for negotiating with South Africa concerning a Rhodesian settlement outside the framework of the OAU. Liberian President Tolbert was criticized for his recent meeting in Monrovia with South African Prime Minister Vorster. The organization's official position is still governed by a resolution, adopted several years ago, expressing opposition to any dialogue between South Africa and black African states.

With the Portuguese presence in Africa all but ended, the council urged member states to normalize relations with Portugal. A number of African governments have already re-established ties with Lisbon and others are in the process of doing so for the first time. The ministers recommended that the OAU liberation committee now focus its activities on Namibia and Rhodesia.

The ministers pledged continuing support for the principle of Afro-Arab cooperation and for Arab positions on the Middle East. They called

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for Palestine to be discussed as an "African" question at the OAU summit meeting later this year in Uganda and for an invitation to Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat to address the summit. The ministers said the OAU liberation committee should give at least token aid to the PLO as it has to other liberation movements in Africa.

The council called for a summit meeting between African and Arab heads of state to discuss closer cooperation, and recommended that a special committee be established to arrange such a meeting, which has also been endorsed at Arab conferences.

Despite the outward show of Afro-Arab solidarity, frictions did surface during the council session between the OAU's black African majority and its North African members who have wielded influence disproportionate to their numbers. Evidence of the black Africans' effort to reassert themselves can be seen in the replacement of the Sudanese head of the OAU's oil committee by Tanzania's foreign minister and in the selection of Addis Ababa over Cairo as the site for a proposed office of Afro-Arab cooperation. In addition, the black Africans continued to complain privately that Arab financial aid to help them meet their higher oil costs is too small and has been too slow in coming. (CONFIDENTIAL NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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~~SECRET~~Africa*ECA's Gardiner to Retire*

Robert Gardiner intends to retire soon as the executive secretary of the UN's regional Economic Commission for Africa. A Ghanaian, Gardiner has held the post since 1963 and has achieved recognition as one of Africa's ablest economists. Secretary General Waldheim reportedly plans to replace Gardiner with Nigeria's respected commissioner for economic development, Dr. Adebayo Adedeji. Such an appointment would please the Lagos government which aspires to play a leadership role in African affairs.

The commission is valued by the black African countries. Although answerable only to UNESCO, the commission shares quarters in Addis Ababa with the Organization of African Unity and has the same membership. In effect, it serves as the OAU's economic arm for coordinating Africa's economic and social development. It has been effective in persuading African governments to harmonize some of their economic and development policies and has established several cooperative institutions such as the African Development Bank. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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~~SECRET~~China-India*Peking Signals Interest in Better Ties*

Chinese Vice Premier Chen Hsi-lien, who is also a Politburo member, told the Indian press this week that Peking is prepared to talk to New Delhi about moving toward normal relations. This is the most authoritative indication to date that China wants to improve ties with India. The vice premier made his remarks to newsmen during a brief stop at a Calcutta airport en route home from the coronation of the Nepalese King. The stopover itself has political significance. The Chinese could have obtained permission to overfly India without landing in Calcutta.

There have been other signs that Peking wants better relations with New Delhi. For the first time in years, Chinese officials in Hong Kong--including the editor of the Peking-controlled *Wen Hui Pao*--have sought out Indian diplomats and spoken favorably about prospects for better ties between the two countries. During the past three weeks, Peking has halted anti-Indian propaganda, a staple of its press reporting since last summer. The Chinese press has also soft-pedaled the new political arrangement in Kashmir and has replayed, without comment, protests by Pakistan, China's ally.

The Indians have been cautious in responding to the Chinese initiatives. Chen was greeted at the Calcutta airport by the West Bengal state agriculture minister, but apparently not by any high-ranking official from the central government. An Indian official told a Western diplomat there were no substantive talks at the airport. Meanwhile, a Chinese table tennis team that came to India recently for a tournament was treated correctly but not lavishly by the Indian government; the group departed quietly for Peking on February 26.

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According to an Indian official, New Delhi's restrained public response to the Chinese initiatives reflects its desire to wait for additional assurances through private diplomatic channels that Peking is interested in closer ties. New Delhi still smarts from China's failure in the past to reciprocate such Indian measures as the easing of visa restrictions for transiting Chinese air passengers.

Nonetheless, New Delhi probably is buoyed by the recent signs of friendship from the Chinese, particularly by Chen's positive remarks on his departure. India is probably anxious to explore whether the Chinese are ready to open a dialogue and eventually upgrade relations from charge to ambassadorial level. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Prime Minister Gandhi strongly favors improved Sino-Indian relations and, if there were considerable progress in this direction, she would be prepared to accept an invitation to visit Peking. At the same time, India will be careful not to jeopardize its relations with the Soviets, particularly while it is trying to secure better deals for substantial Soviet economic and military aid. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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Iraq-Syria

Trading Accusations

The latent hostility between the ruling Baath parties in Iraq and Syria has surfaced over the issue of alleged Syrian support of Iraqi Kurdish rebels.

The latest round between Damascus and Baghdad began a week ago when Iraqi strongman Saddam Husayn Tikriti complained in a Cairo interview that a "certain Arab power" was assisting the Kurdish rebels. Several days later an Iraqi-subsidized newspaper in Beirut named Syria as the culprit and cited a number of "proofs" to corroborate its charges. While criticizing Syria's inability to "liberate its own national soil," the paper said Syria was committing "national treason" because its aid to the Kurdish rebels prevented Iraq from contributing to the Arab war effort against Israel.

The Syrians responded by charging the Iraqis with cowardice during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war. The Syrian deputy prime minister told a Damascus audience that Baghdad had sent troops to the Syrian-Israeli front only in response to popular pressure and that the troops abandoned the battlefield in fear when they thought Damascus was being besieged. The Syrian official also made derogatory references to the Iraqi Baathi movement, branding the Iraqis as separatists preventing the unity of the Baath revolution.

Damascus, in fact, appears to be at least acquiescing in the support being given by Syrian Kurds to their kinsmen in Iraq. Official Syrian support for the Iraqi Kurdish rebels, however, has not been confirmed. Late last year, an Iraqi Kurdish leader claimed Damascus had given the rebels \$1 million and was supplying them with arms. The Iraqi Kurd alleged that Syria was using Syrian Kurdish leaders as a channel to the Iraqi rebels.

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The current dispute between Syria and Iraq should be viewed as the latest chapter in the quarrel the two Baath parties have carried on since their falling out in 1966 over differing approaches to "Arab socialism." (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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